1st April 2013

Your Excellency Madam President of
Federative Republic of Brazil
Dilma Rousseff
Gabinete da Presidência
Palácio do Planalto
Brasília – DF
Brazil

Your Excellency Dilma Rousseff

The American Anthropological Association has been following the complaints concerning the calamitous state of indigenous health care in Brazil, advanced by many Brazilian associations, organizations and indigenous leaders. Together with the Brazilian Anthropological Association, we recognize the legitimacy of these complaints and support these organizations' requests for the intervention needed to resolve this serious state of affairs.

The creation of the Special Secretariat of Indigenous Health (SESAI) under the Ministry of Health (Decree 7336 of October 19, 2010) was hugely supported by indigenous organizations and leaders. Indigenous health had previously been managed by the National Health Foundation (FUNASA), since the creation of the National Indigenous Health Care Subsystem in 1999. Indigenous communities expected the new Secretariat to provide them with more effective representation, and hoped that problems in health care would now be resolved. However, in the two years since the creation of SESAi, and despite efforts to build an independent management model for the Subsystem for Indigenous Healthcare, various problems have been reported. These problems involve not only the operations of the 34 Special Indigenous Health Districts (DSEI), but also the availability of even basic health assistance in indigenous territories managed by SESAI.

These reports of problems have come from various sources located in diverse regions of the country. They emphasize above all the failure of the multidisciplinary health teams to meet the basic needs of indigenous populations, due to a lack of adequate medicines, means of transportation and communication, and even the minimal infrastructure to enable medical care, which has aggravated the already chronic health problems among these people. Some of the most widespread problems are deficiency diseases (malnutrition and anemia, among others), parasitic and infectious diseases, diseases that can be prevented through vaccination, and other endemic diseases, all of which require constant monitoring and surveillance, prompt emergency care, and preventive measures. Cases such as these have been amply reported, especially among the Marubo of the Javari river and the Hup'd'ah of the Upper Rio Negro.
In accordance with the requests of these indigenous organizations, we urge Your Excellency to adopt emergency measures to provide urgently needed medical care and assistance to the indigenous peoples of Brazil. Their frequent appeals have not resulted in any concrete action from SESAI. It should be noted that the main strategy used to date in addressing the serious health problems among indigenous populations – especially the lack of basic medical care and the failure to contract healthcare professionals to provide care for these populations – has been the filing of actions and recommendations by units of the Federal Prosecutor of several federal States.

We are aware, Your Excellency, of your commitment to the defense of indigenous rights, as guaranteed in the Magna Carta and subsequent laws. We appreciate your consideration of these issues, as well as that of the Executive and Legislative bodies, and hope that these requests can be promptly met.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

American Anthropological Association
President

Associação Brasileira de Antropologia
President